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A COMMUNIST (MARXIST-LENINIST) PAMPHLET

TIMOR

between

The Superpowers

TIMOR BETWEEN THE SUPERPOWERS

The Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor (FRETILIN) is a vanguard movement which interprets the most profound aspirations of the people of East Timor to be free from political, cultural and economic colonisation and other forms of domination and exploitation.

– Program of the Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor – Fretilin

From the time that the Portuguese colonialists arrived in the 16th century, the people of East Timor have waged a protracted and often armed struggle against foreign domination. Today, the people of the Democratic Republic of East Timor, led by Fretilin, are fighting for their national independence – but this time against a new enemy, the fascist regime of the Indonesian generals. There is no doubt that the Indonesians are the aggressors, but to understand the present situation it is necessary to go beyond this. It is necessary to understand the nature of the Indonesian regime and its subservience to U.S. imperialism. Similarly, to understand the pro-invasion policies of the Whitlam Labor and Fraser Liberal governments, it is necessary to understand how they too are subservient to U.S. imperialism.

Moreover it is not possible to understand, and to correctly support, the struggle of the people of East Timor without seeing it in the context of the ever-increasing contention between U.S. imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism which threatens the world today.

THE ORIGINS OF THE SUHARTO FASCIST REGIME

Before 1965, Indonesia was ruled by a bourgeois democratic capitalist regime led by Sukarno, one of the leaders of the Indonesian struggle for independence from the Dutch colonialists. The Sukarno regime had some positive features, taking as it did an anti-imperialist position on many issues. However this anti-imperialist line was as often as not purely verbal, and U.S. interests retained control over the bulk of the Indonesian economy. With the lessons learnt from CIA support to some of the separatist movements in Indonesia, and from the period of confrontation with Malaya backed by the British and Australian governments, Sukarno slowly began to take stronger steps. In early 1965 he nationalised the oil distribution networks dominated by Shell, but he left Rockefeller's Caltex in control of oil production. He announced an extensive program which would put the oil companies under stricter control.

Sukarno also played the dangerous game of using one superpower against another. In the economic field

this was true, for in early 1965 the Soviet Union was invited to build a large steelworks in Java. But nowhere was the contention between the two superpowers clearer than in the struggle for military and political influence. The Soviet Union had an extensive program of educational exchange with Indonesia. The United States had a training program for economists and administrators based on Berkeley and Harvard (in which Henry Kissinger was involved). The Indonesian Air Force was largely Soviet-equipped and trained, whereas the army was largely U.S.-armed and trained.

As the Sukarno regime continued to take anti-imperialist measures, and continued to flirt with the Soviet Union, the position of the U.S. State Department hardened. U.S. military aid was cut off in 1964, but Soviet military aid continued. However the U.S. continued to train army officers, and by 1964 over 1200 army officers, 500 police officers and 62,000 police (over half the Indonesian police force at that time) had been through U.S.-sponsored training programs.

The training programs were stopped in March 1965, when Sukarno announced the new series of nationalisations. U.S. Ambassador Galbraith was retired to Singapore, and was replaced in Jakarta by top State Department operative Marshall Green. Within a few months he had put together a plan for a coup, based on the trained agents in the army and the police. Then, in conformity with the usual pattern, he left discreetly.

The coup came in September 1965. The 4 million-

strong Indonesian Communist Party (whose membership was more a reflection of its liberalism than its strength) was smashed, and around one million Indonesians were brutally murdered in what an official of the U.S.-dominated World Bank described as "the best thing that's happened to Uncle Sam since World War II."

Ambassador Galbraith, and the Harvard and Berkeley-trained technocrats flooded back. U.S. capital, together with a little Australian and Japanese capital, poured in. For as Richard Nixon said: "Indonesia constitutes by far the greatest prize in the Southeast Asian area." Soviet military aid ceased, but despite their loss of influence Soviet economic aid continued. As Soviet Ambassador Sytenko claimed: "Indonesia was continuing her anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist policy."

THE FAILURE OF THE INDONESIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PKI)

The PKI had played a prominent role in the Indonesian struggle for independence from the Dutch, but, as admitted in a post-coup self critical analysis, had on a number of issues succumbed to the revisionist line which came to power in the Soviet Union and the "Communist" Party of the Soviet Union. The PKI participated in, but failed to give leadership to the independence movement by leading a people's anti-imperialist united front. Instead it trailed along behind the Sukarno bourgeois popular front.

After the 20th Congress of the "C".P.S.U., the PKI adopted the line of peaceful transition to socialism, and introduced a number of other errors into its program (see People of Indonesia, Unite and Fight to Overthrow the Fascist Regime, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1968 for a detailed self-criticism by the PKI). The reality of Indonesia called so clearly for forms of armed struggle that it was not entirely dropped from the program. But in practice the Indonesian people were lulled into illusions, and this slight concession to reality did not save the PKI from destruction or the lives of one million Indonesians.

The only way to avoid the disaster of September 1965 was to build a broadly-based people's united front led by a tightly-disciplined vanguard PKI. It was necessary to constantly raise the problem of armed struggle, and to solve this problem in practice. By building an open party of 4 million members, by failing to prepare for armed struggle, by supporting the Sukarno popular front tactics under the influence of the revisionist line of the Soviet leadership, the PKI brought itself and the people of Indonesia to disaster.

INDONESIA TODAY

Today Indonesia is almost totally dominated by the U.S. The U.S. is the largest contributor to the Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia set up after the 1965 coup. The group is owed over $600 million, of which

the U.S. is owed $300 million. Over $500 million in direct U.S. investment had gone into Indonesia by 1970, over one third of the total. Investment from Australia is also high, but it comes mainly from U.S.-dominated multi-nationals like Ford and GM-H. Large Australian firms like BHP and CSR and the banks have invested in Indonesia in partnership with U.S. firms. The U.S. is the second largest supplier to Indonesia and takes over 15 per cent of its imports. With the aid of bourgeois economists from the Ford Foundation, the World Bank, Harvard, Berkeley and the Australian National University, one Indonesian company, Pertamina, has run up foreign debts greater than those of Indonesia as a whole under Sukarno.

So great has been the mismanagement of the Indonesian economy, so blatant has been the corruption of the Indonesian bourgeoisie, that even these bourgeois academic worthies have called for a halt. Even the International Monetary Fund has restricted Indonesia's credit. Today the Indonesian economy only stays afloat because of the regular cheques received in Jakarta from Caltex. But Indonesia is so important a part of the new U.S. post-Vietnam defence perimeter that, under U.S. State Department pressure, Caltex has agreed to pay extra for Indonesian oil to help them out.

Militarily Indonesia is also under U.S. domination. By 1970 the Indonesian Army was training elements of the Lon Nol puppet army in Cambodia on behalf of the U.S., and it was used to pass on unauthorised aid to Lon Nol. U.S. military aid increased from $5.4 million in

1969 to $42.5 million this year. In April 1975 the generals got an unexpected bonus of $425 million in military aid which could no longer be sent to Lon Nol.

While it is true that Indonesia is today dominated by the U.S., and that Indonesian policies basically follow the wishes of the U.S. State Department, this does not mean that the Indonesians do not have their own interests as well. For example there are no U.S. bases in Indonesia at the moment, unlike Australia, and Indonesia has subscribed to the stand of the ASEAN countries of working to remove the superpowers from the area. As long as the U.S. State Department is forced to rely on compradors, then there is always an element of doubt.

This explains why, despite the overwhelming U.S. influence, superpower contention has never ceased within Indonesia. Soviet economic aid continued after the 1965 coup, and over the past three years there have been continuing discussions on increasing Soviet economic and technical assistance. There has even been a tentative revival of Soviet military aid.

For these reasons the situation in Indonesia cannot be seen as stable. The compradors can very well change their allegiances as the global balance of power changes. The only thing they will not do is stand for real independence. This can only be achieved by the struggles of the people of Indonesia.

AUSTRALIAN POLICIES TOWARDS INDONESIA

Australian policies have, not surprisingly, been a close copy of those of the U.S. State Department. From coolness to the Sukarno regime, they have changed so that now Indonesia is seen as one of our key friends in the region. This has been the common policy of both Liberal and Labor governments, based on their common support for the American alliance and their opposition to revolution in Asia.

Australia has given both economic and military aid to Indonesia, in ever-increasing amounts since 1970. Particular stress was put on aid to Indonesia by the Whitlam Labor government. This meets the needs of the U.S.-dominated multi-nationals who use Australia as a springboard from which to penetrate the Southeast Asian market. It conforms to the line taken by influential people in foreign affairs and defence, who base all their thinking on the American alliance. At these levels, the only dissent has come from a few people in defence circles who view Indonesia as a potential military threat from which we cannot rely on the U.S. to defend us. The U.S. would back the most subservient, that is all.

The attitude of the Australian people has always been different. The working people of Australia supported the struggle of the Indonesian people for independence from Dutch rule in many ways. We have continued to support the struggle of the Indonesian people against the fascist Suharto regime, but there has been no friendship towards the fascist regime itself.

THE TIMORESE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

Although the people of East Timor had fought the Portuguese colonialists from the moment they arrived, the independence struggle came to a head only after the overthrow of the fascist Caetano regime in Portugal. Three independence movements emerged, Fretilin, the most broadly-based seeking to assemble all those who supported independence. The UDT began as a grouping of the pro-Portuguese bourgeoisie, and rapidly evolved as it became clear that the days of Portuguese rule were numbered, to a position of supporting independence while striving to protect its own interests. Apodeti stood from the beginning, for integration with Indonesia, and had very little support.

Quite rapidly it became clear that the major enemy of independence would not be the Portuguese, but rather the Indonesians and behind them the U.S. State Department. The Indonesians denied any territorial ambitions, but in the Whitlam-Suharto talks of September 1974 in Jogjakarta, Whitlam agreed that "an independent East Timor would be an unviable state and a potential threat to the region."

The new regime in Portugal moved to begin the process of decolonisation, and for a short time Fretilin and the UDT formed a coalition to bring about independence. But the situation in Portugal was evolving, as the two superpowers struggled for influence. The U.S. wanted to maintain its previous position of dominance, or at least to cut its losses. The Soviet Union was using the leaders of the Portuguese "Communist" Party to

gain total control. These conflicts were naturally reflected in the positions of the Portuguese authorities in East Timor. As the schemes of the agents of the Soviet revisionists shattered the unity of the progressive forces in Portugal, the conservative Governor of East Timor came out more openly in favour of the UDT. But at the same time the situation in East Timor was evolving. Fretilin was becoming more and more broadly-based, while the base of the UDT in the bourgeoisie and in traditional religious groups was narrowing. This meant that the only hope for the bourgeoisie to defend their privileges was Indonesia, the only force capable of facing up to the progressive forces led by Fretilin. The UDT came out in favour of integration with Indonesia.

On August 2, 1975 two UDT leaders visited Jakarta. This was the culmination of many delegations to Jakarta. The delegation did not visit the Portuguese consul, as was usual, but spent most of their time with Indonesian officials. Three days later the UDT staged an armed uprising in East Timor in order to seize power before Fretilin became too strong. Undoubtedly the Indonesian generals had promised them full backing, but they were too late. The coup back-fired as the Timorese people as a whole rallied to Fretilin. By early September the coup had failed and Fretilin was in control. UDT and Apodeti forces, such as were left, took refuge in Indonesian Timor.

From September on, Indonesian troops increasingly took up the battle against Fretilin. At first the inter-

vention was undeclared, but as Fretilin troops won more and more victories, the Indonesian involvement became more and more open. It became more and more obvious that negotiations and the Portuguese would not help Fretilin. Finally, on November 28 the people of East Timor, led by Fretilin, declared their independence and founded the Democratic Republic of East Timor.

On December 7th, Gerald Ford and Henry Kissinger spent the night in Jakarta. The next day the Indonesian Army openly invaded East Timor with their U.S.-trained and U.S.-armed troops. A few days later the U.S. Congress voted to double military aid to Indonesia. There can be no doubt that the Indonesians were "given permission" to go ahead.

INDONESIA FACED WITH TIMORESE INDEPENDENCE

It is sometimes alleged that Indonesia is imperialist, but to do this reduces imperialism to a term of abuse, rather than a scientific concept. Lenin defined imperialism as "capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun, in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed."

– Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism

On this definition it is clear that Indonesia is not an imperialist power. It is certainly true that the Indonesians are the aggressors, but it is the United States which is the imperialist. Indonesia is just a springboard for the penetration of U.S. capital into East Timor in the same way that U.S. capital moved into West Irian after the Indonesian take-over. Rockefeller's Freeport Sulfur, and U.S. Steel now take more out of West Irian than the total budget for the region.

This is not to deny that the Indonesian generals have aggressive policies. Nor is it to deny that the Indonesian generals fear an independent East Timor. Faced with the struggle of the people of West Irian against their rule, faced with the struggle of the people of Kalimantan (Borneo) where armed PKI units are operating, faced with the continued existence of the PKI and the constant opposition of the Indonesian people to the fascist puppet regime, the generals rightly fear the exam-example of the progressive policies of the Democratic Republic of East Timor and the armed struggle of the Timorese people. But there is no military threat from the Democratic Republic of East Timor to Indonesia, and the generals will be compelled to accept state-state relations based on the principles of peaceful co-existence.

THE AMERICAN RESPONSE

One element in the American response is classical. The program of Fretilin stands for "gradual elimination

of colonial relations and structures and the active struggle against the establishment of new forms of domination and exploitation" and the "creation of new political, economic and social structures which will serve the interests of the people of East Timor." This is a clear threat to foreign investment in the area, yet the continental shelf of Timor is rich in oil, and Timor may well be rich in minerals. Most of the area is already in the hands of American oil exploration companies.

But in the present world situation there is an over-riding explanation of the American position. Like Whitlam, Kissinger said, just 12 hours before the Indonesian invasion that "a People's Republic in Timor is a threat to peace in the region". The expansionist desires of the Indonesian generals coincided with the global strategic needs of their U.S. overlords.

The U.S. State Department has been forced to change its strategy from the days when the U.S. Marines were sent in at the drop of a hat. After the crushing defeats inflicted on U.S. imperialism by the peoples of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, and in the general economic crisis which is affecting capitalism, U.S. power is on the decline. At the same time the Soviet Union is becoming more aggressive as Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Cyprus, the Middle East and Angola have shown. As the Soviet presence in the Indian and Pacific Oceans is increasing, the growing Soviet influence in countries like India and in former safe U.S. allies like Thailand and the Philippines has forced the U.S. to act.

The response has been to tighten their grip on

countries they wish to use as reliable bases, and if possible as regional policemen. Indonesia was secured as a base from which to contend with Soviet social-imperialism in 1965 in a bloody coup. Australia was secured in 1975 in a bloodless coup. Both were stage-managed by top State Department hatchetman Marshall Green.

For the plans of the U.S., an independent East Timor is a threat. The example of a genuinely independent East Timor would be a constant threat to U.S. domination of Australia and Indonesia by encouraging other peoples to get their countries out of the superpower race to nuclear war. In the short term an East Timor which was more "openhanded" to the Soviet Union would be an even greater threat, for it could offer a haven for Soviet influence in the area.

THE AUSTRALIAN ATTITUDE

Just as the Australian people supported the Indonesian independence movement, so we have supported the struggle of the people of East Timor for independence with rallies and strikes.

Both Labor and Liberal governments have however worked to support the Indonesian invasion, whatever they may have said in public. They have done this for the same reason they appease the Indonesian fascists, because they can only operate within the limits of the American alliance. In the process of justifying their

stand, the complete dishonesty of the bourgeois parliamentary system, and of its servants in the upper levels of the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Defence has been clearly revealed.

There have been individuals at all these levels who have supported to some extent the Timorese people. Some, particularly in the ALP, because in a vague way they support independence movements. But they cannot see that the bourgeois parliamentary nature of the ALP means that it can never really stand for the independence of any country, most of all Australia. At best it can stand for attempting to play off the superpowers, at best for changing our master. Others, particularly in the Liberal Party, support the Timorese because they see Indonesia as a military threat to Australia from which the United States might not defend us. Yet they fail to see that the only way to defend Australia is to get us out of the superpower contention for world domination, and rely on the Australian people to stand for Australian independence.

THE WAY FORWARD

At the present time the people of East Timor are fighting for their independence against the Indonesian invaders. They have received the support of the working people of the whole world, and that of many countries including the People's Republic of China.

What we must realise, and put into practice, is the idea that the people of East Timor who are fighting for

their independence against the Indonesian invaders, the people of Indonesia who are fighting against the fascist puppets of U.S. imperialism, and the people of Australia who are fighting for independence from U.S. domination, have common enemies. We are all subject to U.S. domination. We have all suffered from the U.S. drive to consolidate its hold over countries it dominates in the face of the growing challenge from the Soviet Union. We all face the threat of Soviet social-imperialism which is just waiting for the chance to replace U.S. imperialism as our overlord.

Obviously each people has specific battles to fight in a specific national context. But for each there is only one way forward. We must unite the greatest number of people in the fight for national independence and socialism. We must drive out U.S. imperialism and keep out Soviet social-imperialism.

SUPPORT THE STRUGGLE OF THE PEOPLE OF EAST TIMOR FOR INDEPENDENCE

SUPPORT THE STRUGGLE OF THE PEOPLE OF INDONESIA TO OVERTHROW THE FASCIST REGIME

FIGHT FOR AUSTRALIAN INDEPENDENCE

U.S. OUT! USSR STAY OUT!